

From Our Secretary



Dear Citizens:

This booklet provides information for citizen stewards and landowners, who embody President Bush's vision of cooperative conservation—a vision built upon innovation, local ideas, inspiration and incentives, and on-the-ground action. This pamphlet highlights tools that we hope you find useful in your conservation efforts.

Aldo Leopold, a visionary 20th century conservationist, imagined a nation of citizen stewards. Environmental progress, he proposed, ultimately resides in the efforts of all of us to apply a caring hand to the landscape. It resides in our own actions, in our backyards, at our places of work, on our farms and ranches and factories, and in our communities.

Citizen stewards like yourselves have the sort of “on-the-ground, in-the-dirt, everyday, nose-to-the grindstone” knowledge that improves land management decisions. You have knowledge of time, place, and situation—the details that make one location different from another and that determine what works where.

The Fish and Wildlife Service embraces cooperative conservation—and encourages citizen stewardship through a variety of policy tools that help the Service work with landowners to protect wildlife. One Texas rancher, using these tools, summed up his experience saying, “We’re just ‘wildlifing’ it all over the place, and we’re happy to do it.”

Through an expanding set of cooperative conservation tools, the Service is helping nurture a nation of citizen stewards ‘wildlifing’ it all over the place. As this booklet describes, a power company in Georgia is helping reintroduce a fish, the robust redhorse, back into the Ocmulgee River using a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances. More than 300 landowners have enrolled over 3.6 million acres in 32 Safe Harbor Agreements that protect 36 species listed as endangered or threatened—species such as the northern aplomado falcon, San Joaquin kit fox, and red-cockaded woodpecker.

In Wisconsin, under a Habitat Conservation Plan, 38 partners including timber companies, The Nature Conservancy, state agencies, local highway departments, power companies, and other landowners are protecting over 250,000 acres of habitat for the endangered Karner blue—a butterfly. Across the nation, other habitat plans are helping conserve 590 species on over 39 million acres.

This upwelling of citizen stewardship across the Nation marks a coming of age of cooperative conservation. Through these efforts, our children and grandchildren will continue to enjoy this nation's rich natural diversity. I thank each of you who are lending a caring hand to our lands, waters, and wildlife.

Gale A. Norton
Secretary
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Courtesy of Tami A. Heilemann, DOI